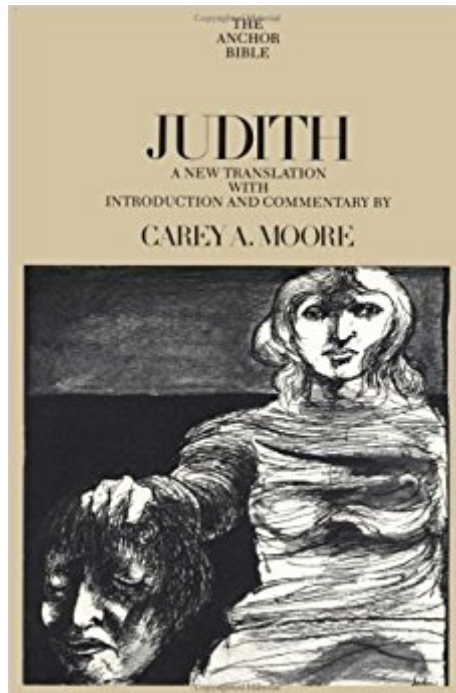




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Judith (The Anchor Bible, Vol. 40)



Synopsis

Judith is Volume 40 in the acclaimed anchor Bible series of new book-by-book translations of the Old and New Testaments and Apocrypha. In the Apocrypha, Judith is the saint who murdered for her people. She offered herself to Holofernes, the Assyrian general sent by Nebuchadnezzar to destroy the Israelites. After she had charmed Holofernes with flattery and drink, Judith chopped off his head while he lay in a drunken stupor, thereby leaving his troops headless and in a state of total panic and confusion. Her victory was celebrated in song and brought peace to her land for years to come. In his illuminating new translation and commentary, Carey A. Moore considers the historicity of the story and explores the author's true intent: Was it to describe actual events or to compose a fictitious story of other purposes? Was his concern more historical or theological? The story of Judith abounds in ironies. There is Judith, the beautiful woman who lived a stark, celibate existence after her husband's death had left her a wealthy widow. Born into a sexist society with rigidly defined roles, Judith better played the man than did any of her male compatriots. There is Holofernes, the Assyrian conqueror, unable to defeat a small Israelite village after dozens of countries had fallen under his sword. Intent on seducing Judith, Holofernes instead lost his head to her. Perhaps the ultimate irony of all is the story of Judith itself: the timeless tale of a deeply religious woman who became revered not for her poverty but for an act of murder. Dr. Moore's study of the canonicity of Judith brings perspective to the story's varied acceptance among both Jews and Christians. It also notes the similarity between this work and the equally popular story of Esther; each woman, through different means, served her people through acts of bravery. The photographs and maps illustrating Judith include depictions of the story of Judith by such masters as Machiavelli, Botticelli, Caravaggio, and Donatello. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Text: English, Hebrew (translation)

Carrey A Moore is an excellent thoughtful scholar. He has written many books and articles on the Bible and Apocrypha. His analysis of Judith is excellent. While the Roman Catholic Church included Judith as part of their Bible, Jews and Protestants did not, even though virtually every one of Judith's sixteen chapters mentions strong Jewish nationalism and has many references to God and proper religious observances, while Ruth and Esther, which they did include in their Bible, have nothing about God or religion. What does Judith say and why was it not included in the Jewish and Protestant Bibles? Is there a worldview in Judith that the rabbis did not want Jews to think about and act upon? Scholars have been debating for centuries whether Judith is a true history or a fable, when it was composed, and why. The basic problem is that the story has many indications that it is a fable. For instance, the book begins "It was in the twelfth year of the reign on Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the Assyrians from his capital Nineveh." Students of the Bible and certainly the ancient readers of the tale knew that Nebuchadnezzar was king of the Babylonians, not of the Assyrians and Nineveh was destroyed in 612 BCE, just short of a decade before Nebuchadnezzar became king, two decades before the supposed events in this tale. Thus it appears that with the very first sentence Judith's author begins his tale with a couple of winks, as if he is saying, "You know what I am going to tell you never happened." The first seven of the sixteen chapters of Judith seems to give only the background to the story. It prompted many scholars to ask why we need seven background chapters. Couldn't the background to the story of Judith that only begins in chapter 8 be told in a single chapter? Moore addresses these problems and more. The story begins during the twelfth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign; the king decides to wage war against a Median king. He invites other nations to join him in the battle. Many do so, but Judea is among the few who refused. Nebuchadnezzar swears revenge against the nations who refused to join him. Five years later, after defeating Media, Nebuchadnezzar appoints Holofernes, the general in command of his armies and second in command to himself to undertake his revenge against the obstinate nations, including Judea. The army was to invade, loot, kill, and deport the inhabitants. Holofernes

marches with 120,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry. Holofernes succeeds against all the nations north of Judea and destroys their sanctuaries and sacred items of worship and insists that the nations worship Nebuchadnezzar as their god. The Judeans who, according to the story, just returned to Judea after being exiled from the land in 586 BCE and who had rebuilt their temple around 516 BCE, are concerned about the safety of their temple and their religion. The Judean recognized the terrible religious menace to their lives and worship. They clothed themselves in sackcloth and ashes, prayed to God and fasted; they begged God for assistance. Holofernes advances against Bethulia and besieges it because local non-Judeans advise him that if he cuts off the water supply and besieges the town, the occupants will have to surrender rather than die of hunger and thirst. The people of Bethulia are soon overcome by hunger and thirst and tell their leader they want to surrender. They rather be slaves to the Assyrians than be dead. Uzziah, the chief magistrate, persuades the people to wait five days. If God does not intervene and save them during the five days, they will surrender. Chapter 8 begins to tell readers how Judith saves her people.

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good book

Excellent.

I really enjoyed the author's approach to this Apocryphal book. The content reflects a lot of research. I found it most helpful as I approach further study of the Apocrypha.

This was very useful and helpful for completing a paper I did on the Book of Judith. It makes a great addition to my library.

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